



Idaho Public Utilities Commission

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Case No. GNR-U-14-01, Notice of Public Workshop

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www.puc.idaho.gov

Commission schedules workshop, taking comments in utilities' application to waive on-site visits

BOISE (Nov. 7, 2014) – Idaho's three major electric utilities are asking state regulators for a waiver from an Idaho Public Utilities Commission regulation that requires them to try to make face-to-face contact with a customer to either collect payment or terminate electric service.

Avista Utilities, Idaho Power Company and Rocky Mountain Power say advances in metering, communication and electronic payments negate the need for face-to-face visits. They claim waiver from the regulation will reduce operating costs for customers and increase the safety of utility employees without sacrificing customer service.

Commission staff will conduct a public workshop on Nov. 21 at 9:30 a.m. in the commission hearing room at 472 W. Washington St. in Boise. The purpose of the workshop is to provide customers an overview of the companies' application and give customers an opportunity to ask questions. Those who cannot attend can participate telephonically by calling, toll-free, **1-888-706-6468** and, when prompted, entering the participant code **4435939**. The commission is also taking written comment on the proposal through Dec. 10.

The utilities claim customers already receive multiple notices prior to disconnection, which is always a last resort. Customers receive mailed past-due notices seven days before disconnection and again three days before disconnection. Twenty-four hours before disconnection, customers receive a telephonic notice or an in-person visit. Avista and Idaho Power are required to knock and leave a door hanger if making a manual (not a remote) disconnect, while Rocky Mountain Power leaves a door hangar at a manual disconnect. These notifications would not change under the proposed exemption. The proposed change would, however, exempt the utilities from the requirement to attempt a face-to-face visit to collect an amount due or disconnect.

Idaho Power is installing 14,500 meters with automated connect-disconnect ability at service points that are remote, difficult to access or had multiple disconnect site visits in an 18-month period. The utility claims that its one-time investment of \$1 million in automated connect and

disconnect meters will reduce annual operating expenses by about \$700,000. Avista has done the same in its north Idaho territory with 600 meters. PacifiCorp, operating as Rocky Mountain Power in eastern Idaho, does not have automated metering. Rocky Mountain leaves door tags at all premises 48 hours before disconnection. PacifiCorp has already discontinued taking payments at the door in Utah, Wyoming, Oregon and California and reports no escalated customer service issues or increased complaints.

All three utilities claim they have expanded payment methods beyond traditional U.S. mail or payment at local offices. Online and payment-by-telephone options allow customers to make payments from their homes, from any Internet connection or through their mobile phones. The vast majority of customers now make their payments by mail or online banking methods. Less than 4 percent of customers pay at the door. Paying at the door is the most expensive option for customers partially because both Idaho Power and Rocky Mountain Power also assess a \$20 field visit charge.

If the exemption is approved, each of the utilities will conduct a communications campaign to inform customers of the change.

Comments are accepted via e-mail through Dec. 10, 2014, by accessing the commission's Website at www.puc.idaho.gov and clicking on "Case Comment Form," under the "Consumers" heading. Fill in the case number (GNR-U-14-01) and enter your comments. Comments can also be mailed to P.O. Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720-0074 or faxed to (208) 334-3762.

The utilities' application, along with other documents related to this case, is available on the commission's Web site. Click on "File Room" at the top of the page, then on "Multi-Utility Cases" under "Cases" and scroll down to the above case number.

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